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## GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF THREE SPECIES OF SMALL ANTS COMMON IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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The Argentine Ant Eradication Campaign in N.S.W. created a great deal of interest by the general public in the small ants found in houses and gardens of N.S.W. A large number of ant samples was sent to the Biological and Chemical Research Institute for identification and over approximately eight years a sizeable collection was built up. The three commonest species received were *Iridomyrmex darwinianus* (Forel), *Technomyrmex albipes* (F. Smith) and *Pheidole megacephala* (F.).

Figure 1 shows the areas from which the three species have been identified. *I. darwinianus* was found along the coast between Taree and Jervis Bay and west to Dubbo, Parkes, Griffith and Finley in the south-west. In the northern part of the state *I. darwinianus* has a more restricted distribution, being identified only from the New England region.

*T. albipes* is more widely distributed in the north of the state and along the coast where it ranges from Ballina in the north to Bega in the south. This species reaches west to Moree, Coonabarabran, Narromine and Griffith, but does not extend as far as Finley in the south-west.

*P. megacephala*, in contrast, is restricted to the coastal districts from Tweed Heads to Bega. It was reported from Springwood in the Blue Mountains, west of Sydney, but not from any locality further west.

The most frequently received species was *P. megacephala*; this may be a reflection of its greater abundance or activity. However, the survey was aimed at small brown ants and the results could consequently have been biased away from small black ants, such as *T. albipes*.

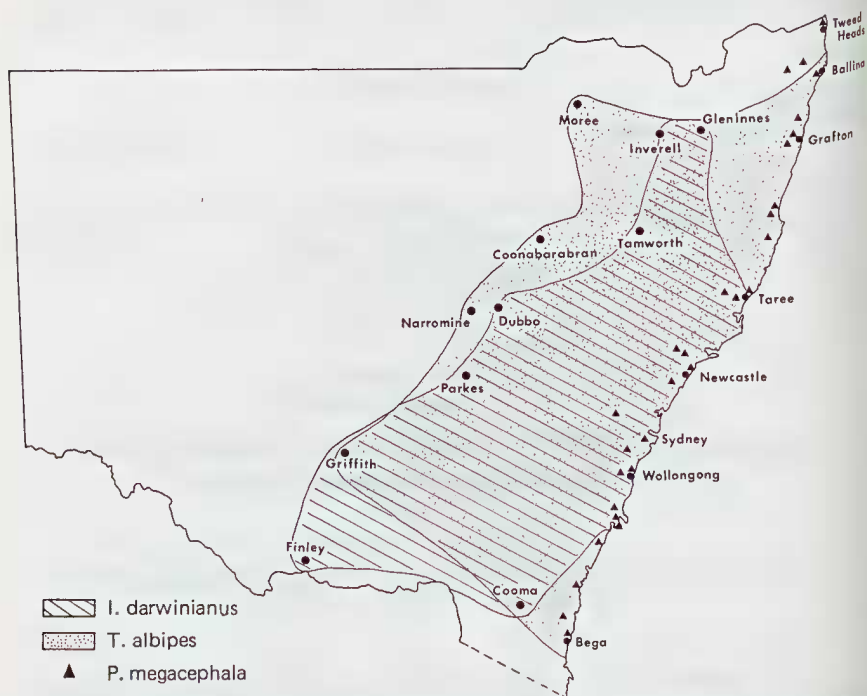


Fig. 1. Map of New South Wales showing distributions of *Iridomyrmex darwinianus*, *Technomyrmex albipes* and *Pheidole megacephala*.

Of the three species listed in this publication, *T. albipes* and *P. megacephala* each have a wide range of distribution beyond Australia (Wilson and Taylor, 1967). *I. darwinianus* has its native range apparently restricted to Australia but was recorded, as an introduced species, from Auckland, New Zealand, by Taylor (1959). The population concerned was evidently successfully eradicated in 1959 and *I. darwinianus* has not been subsequently reported from New Zealand (R. W. Taylor, pers comm.). *P. megacephala*, considered to be a native of Africa, has been spread by commerce to almost all of the more humid parts of the tropics. It is common in Queensland, in many parts of Polynesia, including Ontong, Java, Samoa and neighbouring islands, and in the Marquesas and Hawaii.

*T. albipes* is considered by Wilson and Taylor (1967) to be the most widespread of all the Indo-Australian *Technomyrmex*, ranging as a dominant ant from India to eastern Australia and throughout the Pacific, including Melanesia and Micronesia. It is common in Polynesia, particularly Samoa, Tonga and neighbouring islands, as well as in Hawaii, where it was introduced possibly through human commerce.

#### References

- Taylor, R. W., 1959. The Australian ant *Iridomyrmex darwinianus* (Forel) recorded from New Zealand. *N.Z. Ent.* 2(4): 18-19.  
 Wilson, E. D. and Taylor, R. W., 1967. The ants of Polynesia (Hymenoptera: Formicidae). *Pacif. Insects Monogr.* 14: 1-109.